

PERAC PENSION NEWSFLASH

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Ethics Commission Fines Ex Middlesex Board Member Lawrence Driscoll

Fined \$10,000, Civil Forfeiture \$2,683

Former Middlesex Retirement Board member Lawrence Driscoll has admitted to violations of the state conflict of interest law in a Disposition Agreement released today by the State Ethics Commission. Violations consisted of (1) improperly awarding his friend a \$557,000 building renovation contract at the Board's headquarters and failing to disclose the friendship; (2) subsequently voting to hire his friend as the headquarters facilities manager and failing to disclose the friendship; and (3) submitting improper expense reimbursements.

"Public employees violate the public trust when they use their positions to benefit themselves or their friends. Public employees who have private friendships that overlap with their public duties need to perform their duties fairly and objectively and disclose those relationships to avoid creating an actual or apparent conflict of interest," said Ethics Commission Executive Director Karen L. Nober. "It also goes without saying that public money may not be used to reimburse personal expenses."

The first violation resulted from a determination that the renovation contract "was given...through a process which gave the false impression of a competitive bid process..." The second violation was as a result of Driscoll "acting in a manner which would cause a reasonable person, knowing all the relevant facts, to conclude that [the friend] can improperly influence or unduly enjoy Driscoll's favor in the performance of Driscoll's official duties" and failing to make the proper public disclosure to remove the appearance of impropriety. The third violation was due to the submission for reimbursement by Driscoll of expenditures that were not legitimate expenses of the Board.

PERAC Executive Director Joseph E. Connarton stated, "Conflict of interest violations to which Mr. Driscoll admitted should serve as a stark reminder to all board members to review their current relationships with their managers, custodians, third party marketers, and all vendors to ensure that those relationships are in complete accord with best practices and good corporate governance."

